

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04877 230721Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----082307 230723Z /14/46  
O 221436Z AUG 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9351  
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4877

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA SIX)

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT MOPS LE SY  
SUBJ: LEBANON: SYRIAN PRESENCE

REFS: (A) STATE 211480, (B) DAMASCUS 4833

1. WE GENERALLY AGREE WITH THE VIEWS SET FORTH BY AMBASSADOR SEELYE IN REFTEL (B). IN ADDITION, WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS TO OFFER:

2. ASSUMING WE PUT SUCH A PROPOSAL TO SARKIS AND/OR ASSAD, THE FOLLOWING SITUATION WOULD FACE US:

A. NEITHER THE LEBANESE ARMY NOR THE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES ARE YET PREPARED TO ASSUME SIGNIFICANT SECURITY FUNCTIONS IN BEIRUT.

B. COMING FROM US, SUCH A PROPOSAL (WHICH WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE LEAKED TO THE LEBANESE PRESS) WOULD BE WIDELY INTERPRETED BY THE LEBANESE MUSLIMS AND SYRIANS HERE AS AN INDICATION THAT THE  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 04877 230721Z

U.S. WAS SIDING WITH THE MARONITES IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF LEBANON.

C. SUCH A PROPOSAL WOULD ALSO BE INTERPRETED BY THE MARONITES AS AN INDICATION THAT WE WERE SIDING WITH THEM. IT COULD THUS MAKE THEM LESS COMPROMISING TOWARD THE SYRIAN PRESENCE AND MORE AGGRESSIVE IN THEIR BEHAVIOR TOWARD THE SYRIANS.

D. WE WOULD HAVE TO LIVE WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT HAPPENS AS A RESULT OF OUR INITIATIVE. THE RESULTS WOULD BE UNPREDICTABLE, BUT THERE IS A RISK THAT SUCH A UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL WOULD LEAD TO A WIDER CONFLAGRATION.

3. DESPITE THE FOREGOING, WE FEEL THAT AN OVERRIDING OBJECTIVE IS SAVING PEOPLE'S LIVES, AND IF WE CAN SAVE LIVES BY PERSUADING THE SYRIANS TO DISENGAGE OR TO WITHDRAW SOME TROOPS FROM BEIRUT, THEN WE SHOULD TRY. WE ASSUME THAT WE WOULD HAVE MORE OF A CHANCE OF PERSUADING THEM TO DO SO IF WE MADE IT PART OF A PACKAGE DEAL, SIMULTANEOUSLY IN SOME FORM LEANING ON THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA EXTREMISTS. IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, WE COULD CONTINUE TO SIMULTANEOUSLY PERSUADE A) THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS TO HOLD THEIR FIRE AND CONTROL THEIR EXTREMISTS AND B) THE SYRIAN ARMY TO REFRAIN FROM INDISCRIMINATE FRENCH-MANDATE-STYLE BOMBARDMENT.

4. IF WE TAKE UP THE DISENGAGEMENT/WITHDRAWAL PROPOSAL WITH THE SYRIANS, THEY CAN DEMONSTRABLY ARGUE THAT WHENEVER THEY EVACUATE A POSITION, THE PHALANGISTS AND CHAMOUNISTS TAKE IT OVER, EITHER IMMEDIATELY OR AFTER AN INTERMEDIATE PERIOD IN WHICH THEIR MILITIAMEN ARE FIRST CO-LOCATED WITH LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES AND THEN PUSH THE LATTER OUT. EVEN THIS ARGUMENT STILL BEGS THE QUESTION AS TO WHETHER THE SYRIAN ARMY STILL NEEDS TO CONTROL ALL THE AREAS HEMMING IN THE CHRISTIAN DISTRICTS OF EAST BEIRUT. FOR EXAMPLE, WE AND THE BRITISH EMBASSY WONDER WHY THE SYRIANS FIND SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 04877 230721Z

IT SO IMPERATIVE IN PURSUANCE OF THEIR PEACE-KEEPING MISSION TO MAINTAIN THE RIZK SKYSCRAPER AS A PARTICULARLY PROMINENT AND LETHAL GUN PLATFORM. THE WAY IN WHICH THIS POSITION LOOMS OVER ASHRAFIYAH IS PARTICULARLY GALLING TO THE CHRISTIANS. THESE ARE THE SORT OF DETAILED QUESTIONS WE COULD ASK THE SYRIANS HERE IF THEY WOULD DESIGNATE SOMEONE TO DISCUSS THEIR POSITION WITH THE U.S. AND WESTERN AMBASSADORS. (IN THIS CONNECTION, WE APPRECIATE AMBASSADOR SEELYE'S APPROACH REPORTED IN DAMASCUS 4833).

5. FURTHERMORE, IF SOME OF THE SYRIAN TROOPS CAN BE WITHDRAWN FROM EAST BEIRUT, THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY IN WEST BEIRUT WOULD BE HAPPY TO HAVE THOSE TROOPS RE-DEPLOYED IN WEST BEIRUT. AS THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR HAS POINTED OUT TO THE GOL (BEIRUT 4585), WEST BEIRUT HAS BEEN LARGELY ABANDONED BY THE SYRIAN TROOPS AND IS BEING INCREASINGLY SUBJECTED TO GANG TERRORISM. IT IS ARGUABLE THAT SYRIAN TROOPS ARE NEEDED MORE TO PROVIDE SECURITY IN ADDITIONAL PARTS OF WEST BEIRUT THAN TO CONTAIN THE CHRISTIANS IN ASHRAFIYAH.

6. FINALLY, WITH REGARD TO THE CONNECTION BETWEEN REESTABLISHING GOL SOVEREIGNTY IN THE SOUTH AND FIGHTING IN BEIRUT, WE SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT A PRIMARY EFFECT OF THE LEBANESE ATTEMPT TO

DEPLOY ITS BATTALION INTO THE SOUTH HAS BEEN TO SERIOUSLY DIS-TRACT THE POLICY-MAKING LEVEL OF THE GOL FROM ADDRESSING ITSELF TO THE BEIRUT CRISIS. THIS IS PUTTING THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE. IF THE BEIRUT FIGHTING IS NOT STOPPED, THERE WILL ULTIMATELY BE NO EFFECTIVE GOL LEFT TO TRY TO ASSERT SOVEREIGNTY IN THE SOUTH (NOR FOR THAT MATTER AN AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE HERE EXCEPT UNDER THE STATE OF SIEGE CONDITIONS OF 1976). IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT ONLY AFTER THE ISSUE OF LAF DEPLOYMENT IN THE SOUTH HAD REACHED AN IMPASSE DID HOSS BELATEDLY TAKE UP DIRECTLY WITH ASSAD THE ISSUE OF THE SHELLING OF BEIRUT. WE THINK THE LEBANESE ESTABLISHMENT SHOULD NOW DEFER DEVOTING ITS ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEM OF FURTHER DEPLOYMENT IN THE SOUTH, DESPITE SYRIAN AND MUSLIM PRESSURE, UNTIL AN EFFECTIVE DEAL IS WORKED OUT TO STOP THE BEIRUT FIGHTING.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 BEIRUT 04877 230721Z

KINSOLVING

SECRET

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** TROOP DEPLOYMENT, REPORTS, SECURITY  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 22 aug 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978BEIRUT04877  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS,082208 FMACHAK 08/22/08  
**Errors:** n/a  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780347-0300, D780343-0230  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** BEIRUT  
**Handling Restrictions:**  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1978/newtext/t197808124/demeuaad.tel  
**Line Count:** 137  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** acd6f759-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION SS  
**Original Classification:** SECRET  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Reference:** 78 STATE 211480, 78 DAMASCUS 4833  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 30 jun 2005  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 1589273  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 20010601; <DBA CHANGED> mcm 20010917  
**Subject:** LEBANON: SYRIAN PRESENCE  
**TAGS:** PINT, MOPS, PINS, LE, SY  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/acd6f759-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014